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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000701

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/13/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES REJECTS ERICQ PIERRE'S
NOMINATION AS PRIME MINISTER

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 607

[1](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 537

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
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Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The Chamber of Deputies on May 12 rejected President Preval's nominee for Prime Minister, Ericq Pierre. The Senate had endorsed him May 7. Since both houses of parliament must vote to approve, Pierre's confirmation has definitively failed, and the President now must start the selection and confirmation process anew. Many Embassy sources believe that acting PM Alexis, still smarting from taking the fall for rising food prices and already looking ahead to his presidential campaign, influenced deputies to reject Pierre. Pierre's failure to secure the nomination delays the formation of a new government and puts on the backburner important issues such as the country's economic situation and the pending Senate elections. End summary.

Chamber of Deputies Shoots Down Ericq Pierre

[1](#)2. (U) The Senate voted overwhelmingly to confirm Ericq Pierre on May 7, but the Chamber of Deputies, always the more unruly chamber, thought differently. Their vote on May 12 was 51 against Pierre, 35 for him, and 9 abstentions. The ostensible reason for those voting against was discrepancies in the way Pierre's name was listed on several documents submitted to the Chamber commission charged with examining his citizenship and other constitutional eligibility requirements.

[1](#)3. (C) Deputy Ronald Lareche (Fusion, Capotille/Northeast) told Poloff May 12 that Pierre's documents did not fulfill the criteria outlined by the Constitution. Lareche claimed deputies rejected Pierre's nomination because of discrepancies between Pierre's official name on various documents, including his birth certificate, customs forms and Preval's nomination letter. One listed his name as Ericq Pierre Pierre, others as Pierre Ericq Pierre, and yet another

as simply Ericq Pierre. The inconsistencies fed into existing doubts about Pierre's Haitian ancestry and citizenship (ref A).

Lespwa Deserts Preval

¶4. (C) Press reports say that most deputies from President Preval's Lespwa party voted against Pierre. Most of the deputies voting against Pierre, including Lareche, were members of the Coalition of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPP), an informal bloc of approximately 50 deputies from myriad political parties. Another CPP member, Deputy Stephen Benoit (Petionville/West), who recently quit the Lespwa party, told Poloff May 12 that Pierre's documents were unacceptable, and that the deputies expect Preval to re-start consultations with political parties and submit a new nominee to the Senate next week. (Note: Benoit abstained from the vote. End note.)

Many Fingers Point to Acting PM Alexis

¶5. (C) Embassy sources in Parliament, MINUSTAH and the Presidency point the finger at acting PM Jacques Edouard Alexis as having influenced deputies to reject Pierre, with some accusing Alexis of having bribed deputies outright. Presidential Economic Adviser Gabriel Verret told the Ambassador May 13 that President Preval had met with Lespwa leaders last weekend, who assured him they were reaching out to deputies, and that the deputies would support Pierre. Now, Preval believes that Alexis manipulated deputies to vote down Preval's choice for PM. Verret believed this was not about the person of Pierre but about Alexis getting even with President Preval. Senate President Kely Bastien told the

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Ambassador the same day that Preval indeed believed that 'persons in the current government' influenced deputies' votes. The President had remonstrated with a number of deputies, making the point that this vote undermined their credibility and called into question pressing items on Haiti's agenda such as Senate elections.

¶6. (C) MINUSTAH Political Affairs Officer Lizbeth Cullity (protect) told Poloff May 12 that all evidence to date points to PM Alexis as the culprit. Alexis is attempting to build loyalty among parliamentarians in anticipation of his 2011 presidential campaign, she speculated. MINUSTAH's Chief of Electoral Assistance, Marc Plum, told Poloff May 12 that the prolonged quest for a new Prime Minister adds yet another wrinkle to the long-delayed elections (ref B), as Alexis' caretaker government cannot administer new legislation such as the electoral law now pending in parliament, which must await the arrival of a new PM and Cabinet. Deputy Sorel Francois (Fanmi Lavalas, Port-au-Prince/West) told Poloff May 12 that ousted Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis had manipulated the CPP and convinced them to vote against Pierre. He said both Alexis and President Preval have a habit of intentionally creating crises to distract from true priorities, such as economic reform and elections.

Comment: Where Do We Go From Here?

¶7. (C) The initial confirmation votes in both legislative chambers were to determine constitutional eligibility. Pierre's policies and personal qualifications for the job never figured in the immediate confirmation debate in either house of parliament. The flimsy rationale for rejecting Pierre lends credibility to the theory that sinister political games lay behind Pierre's rejection. We have yet to see any real evidence of Alexis bribing deputies, but members of the lower house of Parliament are notoriously venal.

¶8. (U) Whatever the reason for yesterday's vote, the process of selecting a new PM nominee now starts anew from square one: the President chooses a candidate in consultation with the Presidents of both legislative chambers. That candidate is then voted up or down by both chambers. If confirmed, the PM selects his cabinet, and then presents his government and a government program to the parliament for a vote of confidence.

¶9. (C) Senate President Bastien told the Ambassador the President will select a new candidate by the end of this week. Economic Advisor Verret said the President could find someone else, or (noting his boss' stubborn streak) resubmit Ericq Pierre's name. In any case, Preval understands the impact of this vote on the country's agenda of elections and addressing the hunger issue. Without a government, the country will not be able to press ahead with Senate elections (by implementing the electoral law, due to be voted on by the Chamber of Deputies May 13) or with policies to mitigate hunger and stimulate agriculture.

SANDERSON